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AUTHOR Crowe, Kevin, Comp.
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ABSTRACT

The Enhanced American College Test (ACT) and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) are the two primary college admission test batteries administered in Nevada. This report provides an overview of the two examinations and major trends pertinent to Nevada in 1991. These tests apply to only a portion of the high school student population, and are not intended for state-to-state or year-to-year comparisons. In 1991, as in the past, Nevada students scored higher on the SAT than students nationwide. Minority students in Nevada also generally demonstrated scores above their national counterparts. Nevada verbal scores increased slightly, in the face of national decline, and mathematics scores decreased slightly, as they did nationally. Since 1989, available data indicate that Nevada students outperform the national comparison group for the ACT. Nevada minority students generally score higher than minorities in the national sample. The number of students taking the ACT has declined from a high in 1983, but is beginning to level off. SAT usage has remained at a higher number than 1982, with a slight decrease in comparison with 1990. In 1991, 4,069 Nevada students took the ACT, and 2,406 Nevada students took the SAT. Five graphs and two tables provide data for 1982 through 1991. (SLD)

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SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST (SAT) AND AMERICAN COLLEGE TEST (ACT)

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Nevada Statewide Results -1991

Compiled by
Kevin Crowe, Ed.D.

EUGENE T. PASLOV
Superintendent of Public Instruction

MARCIA R. BANDERA
Deputy Superintendent

MARTY SAMPLE
Deputy Superintendent

Planning, Research, and Evaluation Branch
KEVIN CROWE, *Director*

Capitol Complex, Carson City, Nevada 89710

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AND
AMERICAN COLLEGE TEST (ACT)

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Special thanks to Mary Geisler, Management Assistant,
for her assistance in the production of this report.

OCTOBER 1991

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INTRODUCTION

The two primary college admission test batteries administered in Nevada are the "Enhanced" American College Test **(ACT)**, and the Scholastic Aptitude Test **(SAT)**.

The publishers of both of these test batteries produce annual summary reports including state, regional and national scores. These reports are made available during September. The Department does not receive information about other individual states or individual school districts in Nevada. This report is intended to provide the reader with an overview of these two examinations and major trends pertinent to Nevada.

The Department maintains much more extensive demographic data about the Nevada and national examinee pool. People interested in such technical information should contact the Planning, Research and Evaluation Branch at (702) 687-3130.

It should be stressed that the students involved generally plan on attending college. **Because these tests apply to a portion of the high school student population, comparisons from year-to-year and state-to-state should be made with caution.**

I. ABOUT THE SAT

The Admissions Testing Program of the College Board includes four major components:

The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) -- The **SAT** is a 2 1/2 hour, multiple-choice test that measures developed verbal and mathematical reasoning abilities related to successful performance in college. **SAT** scores are intended to supplement the secondary school record and other information about the student in assessing readiness for college-level work. Student performance on the **SAT** is reported on a scale of 200 to 800, with standard error of measurement of approximately 30 to 40 points. The verbal portion of the **SAT** also yields subscores in reading comprehension and vocabulary, which are reported on a scale of 20 to 30, with a standard error to measurement of approximately 4 points.

The Test of Standard Written English (TSWE) -- This is a 30-minute, multiple-choice test administered with the **SAT**. The **TSWE** evaluates students' ability to recognize standard written English. **TSWE** scores are intended to help place students in appropriate freshman English courses. The scores are reported on a scale of 20 to 80; however, scores above 60 are reported as 60 + because the test is not designed to make distinctions above that level. The standard error of measurement on the **TSWE** is approximately 3.5 points.

The Achievement Tests -- Designed to measure knowledge in specific subject areas and the ability to apply that knowledge, the Achievement Tests are independent of particular textbooks or methods of instruction. Although the types of questions change little from year to year, the tests do evolve to reflect general trends in high school curriculums.

Achievement tests are given in English Composition, Literature, American History and Social Studies, European History and World Cultures, Mathematics Level I, Mathematics Level II, French, German, Hebrew, Latin, Spanish, Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. All are one-hour multiple-choice tests, with the exception of a version of the English Composition Test that contains an essay assignment in addition to multiple-choice questions. Scores of all the Achievement Tests are reported on a scale of 200 to 800, with a standard error of measurement of approximately 30 points.

The Student Descriptive Questionnaire (SDQ) -- The **SDQ** contains questions about the students background, academic record, extracurricular activities, and plans for college study. The **SDQ** is designed to enable individual students to present to colleges a broader picture of themselves than in conveyed by test scores alone. Students voluntarily respond to the **SDQ** as part of the registration process for the **SAT** or Achievement Tests. The **SDQ** information included in this report is useful in monitoring trends and understanding the background of the college-bound students who take the **SAT**.

NEVADA SAT RESULTS

This year, as in the past, Nevada students scored higher on the **SAT** than students nationwide. Generally, minority students in Nevada also demonstrated scores above their national counterparts. (See Table 1)

Verbal scores show a slight increase to 435 since last year in Nevada. At the same time, national scores continued to decline steadily since 1985, dropping 2 points to their lowest in 10 years. Nevada verbal scores remain higher than national averages. (See Figure 1)

Mathematics scores have decreased slightly since last year both nationally and in Nevada. (See Figure 2)

TABLE 1

SAT Results for Nevada and National - 1991

NEVADA	Number of SAT Takers	Percent	% Male/Female	SAT-V Mean	SAT-M Mean
All Students	2,637	100	45/55	435	484
Males	1,187	47	100/0	438	513
Females	1,091	53	0/100	433	459
ETHNIC GROUPS					
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	29	1	38/62	436	462
American/Asian Amer/Pacific Isle	217	9	43/57	411	491
Black/African American	121	5	34/66	381	416
Hispanic: Mexican Amer/Chicano	78	3	37/63	415	457
Puerto Rican	6	0	83/17	467	533
Other Hispanic	48	2	27/73	383	444
White	1,820	77	49/53	445	491
Other	34	1	50/50	428	495
No Response	53				

Continued....

TABLE 1, continued

NATIONAL	Number of SAT Takers	Percent	% Male/Female	SAT-V Mean	SAT-M Mean
All Students	1,032,685	100	48/52	422	474
Males	493,252	48	100/0	426	497
Females	539,433	52	0/100	418	453
ETHNIC GROUPS					
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	7,843	1	47/53	393	437
American/Asian Amer/Pacific Isle	76,703	8	50/50	411	530
Black/African American	100,209	10	42/58	351	385
Hispanic: Mexican Amer/Chicano	28,602	3	45/55	377	427
Puerto Rican	12,065	1	44/56	361	406
Other Hispanic	25,584	3	45/55	382	431
White	687,231	72	48/52	441	489
Other	16,300	2	46/54	411	466
No Response	78,148				

FIGURE 1.
SAT VERBAL
Test Results Nevada and Nationally
1982-1991

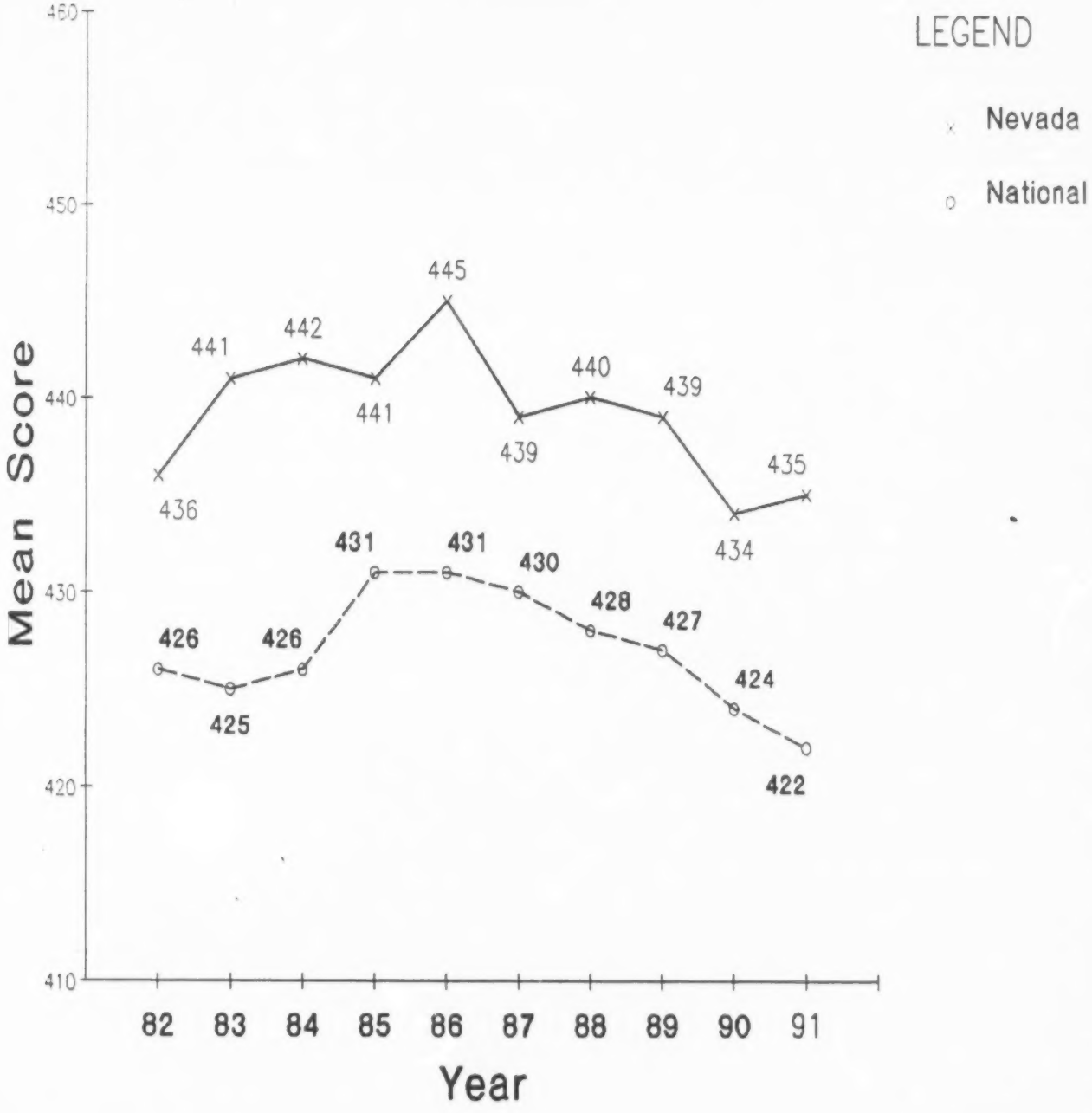
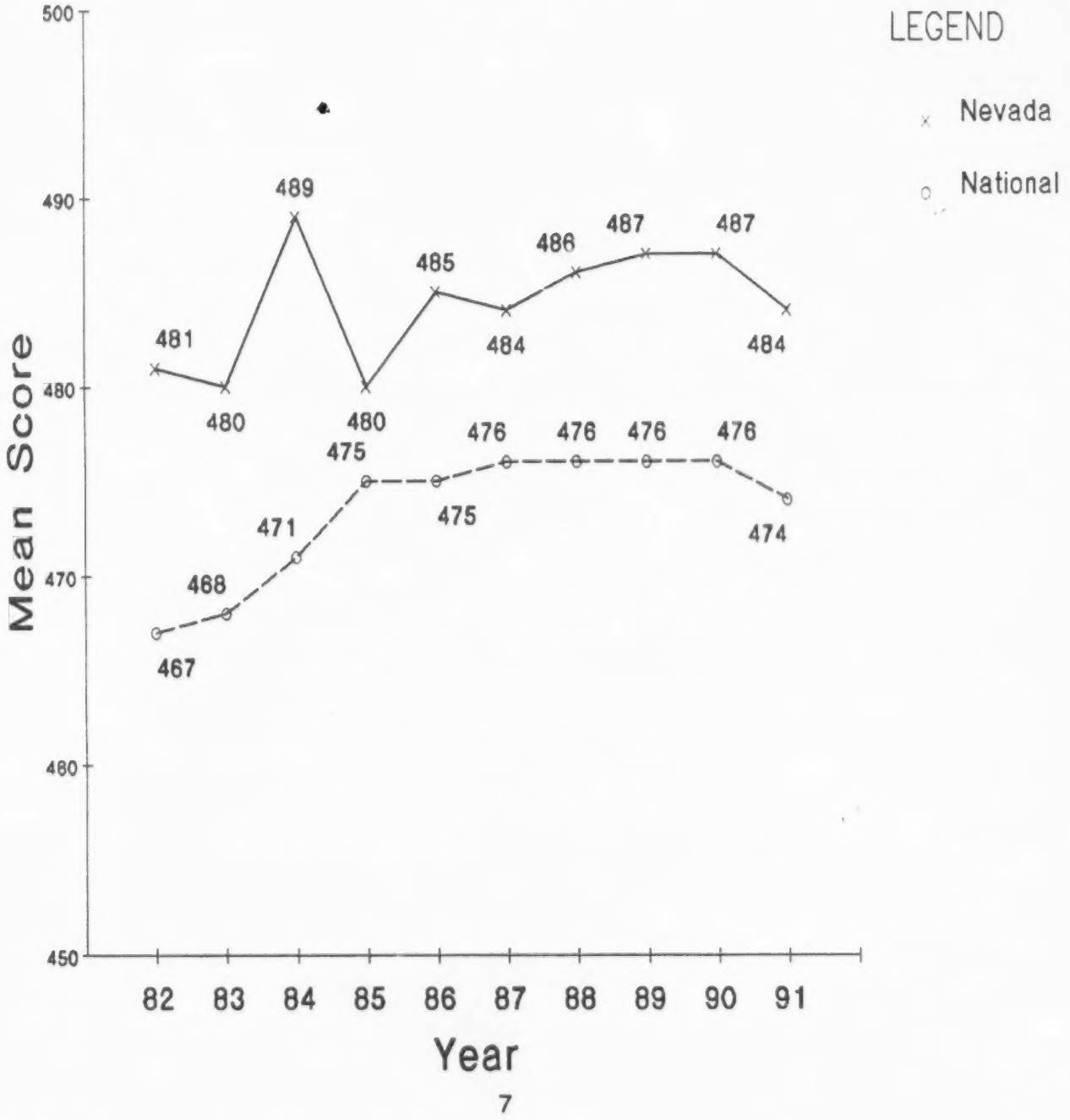


FIGURE 2.
SAT MATH
Test Results Nevada and Nationally
1982-1991



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II. ABOUT THE ENHANCED ACT ASSESSMENT

The Enhanced Act test has been used since 1989. This Enhanced **ACT** Assessment is a revised examination that is responsive to changes in high school curricula, is sensitive to current expectations about the skills and knowledge students need for success in college, and offers information educators need to address some of the many challenges they now face.

To make the changes in the **ACT** Assessment as powerful and useful as possible, the advice and opinions of college and high school teachers and administrators, course content experts, and curriculum specialists was obtained. The Enhanced **ACT** Assessment reflects this careful study and speaks to many of the needs it revealed.

Some of the major findings this process produced include:

- Need for improved information for placement and advising in English, mathematics, reading and science

- Limited use of the current **ACT** Social Studies Reading and Natural Sciences Reading scores

- Need for a measure of "pure" reading ability and comprehension

- The importance of scientific literacy and reasoning skills.

The contents of the four **ACT** tests (i.e., English, Math, Reading and Science Reasoning have been revised to address these concerns. The Enhanced **ACT** Assessment increases the emphasis in rhetorical skills in the measurement of writing proficiency, increases the number of advanced math items, and includes a new reading test which features inferential and reasoning skills and a test designed to measure science reasoning. The Enhanced **ACT** Assessment
provides subscores in English, Mathematics, and Reading -- more precise information about a student's level of educational development. All
these changes have been designed to increase the value of the **ACT** Assessment to students, schools, and colleges.

The enhancements that have been made in the **ACT** Assessment tests can best be understood in the context of the philosophy of E.F. Lindquist, a pioneer in educational measurement and co-founder of The American College Testing Program. In the 1950s, as he shaped the program that became the forerunner of the Enhanced **ACT** Assessment, Lindquist stipulated that the **ACT** Assessment should be multipurpose, designed to meet a variety of educational needs -- advising and counseling, admitting students to college, placing them in courses, evaluating educational offerings, adapting instruction to individual differences, and identifying students for scholarships. It must, he said, measure as directly as possible students' readiness for college and their ability to perform the kinds of tasks they will have occasion to perform in college.

Like the earlier **ACT** tests, the Enhanced **ACT** Assessment measures the high school achievement of students in higher order academic skills and the application of these skills to tasks they will encounter in college.

The Enhanced ACT Tests

The Enhanced ACT Assessment comprises four tests.

English Test 75 items/45 minutes

Mathematics Test 60 items/60 minutes

Reading Test 40 items/35 minutes

Science Reasoning Test 40 items/35 minutes

(Total testing time: 2 hours, 55 minutes)

Scores on the Enhanced ACT Tests

Students receive twelve scores on the Enhanced ACT Assessment--four test scores, seven subscores, and a composite score:

English Score
Subscores:
1. Usage/Mechanics
2. Rhetorical Skills

Mathematics Score
Subscores:
3. Pre-Algebra/Elementary/Algebra
4. Intermediate Algebra/Coordinate Geometry
5. Plane Geometry/Trigonometry

Reading Score
Subscores:
6. Social Studies/Sciences
7. Art/Literature

Science Reasoning Score

Composite Score (range 0-36)

Interest Inventory

Because many students explore career options as they plan for college, a systematic assessment of career interests has been part of the **ACT** Assessment for more than 15 years. Items in the **ACT** Interest Inventory have been updated through a series of field studies involving 12,000 9th graders, college-bound students, and adults. The new edition, introduced with the Enhanced **ACT** Assessment, continues to use **ACT**'s World-of-Work Map and Career Family Link to link students' interest scores to educational and career options.

What Has Not Changed

These familiar noncognitive components of the **ACT** assessment remain unchanged in the Enhanced Act Assessment.

Student Profile Section

Admissions/Enrollment Information
Educational Plans, Interests, and Needs
Special Educational Needs, Interests, and Goals
College Extracurricular Plans
Financial Aid
Background Information
Factors Influencing College Choice
High School Information
High School Extracurricular Activities
Out-of-Class Accomplishments
Evaluation of High School Experience

Career/Educational Planning

World-of-Work Map

Career Family List

High School Course/Grade Information

Information About Colleges

NEVADA ACT RESULTS

Table 2 provides average **ACT** composite scores compared to National and regional results. Since 1989, available trend data indicates that Nevada outperforms the national comparison group.

Generally, Nevada minority students also score higher than minorities in the National sample. Asian students do not exceed national averages

Figure 3 illustrates that Nevada **ACT** scores were consistently above the national **ACT** scores in the years 1989-1991. Only the 3 previous years are depicted since 1989 marked the use of a new version of the **ACT**, called The "Enchanced **ACT**."

Table 2 provides average **ACT** Composite scores for various racial-ethnic groups from 1987 to 1991.

TABLE 2

Trends in Average ACT Composite Scores*

Reference Group	NEVADA N	NEVADA Composite	NATIONAL N	NATIONAL Composite
All Graduates				
1987	3677	21.0	777424	20.8
1988	4033	20.9	842322	20.8
1989	4033	20.9	855171	20.6
1990	4024	21.0	817096	20.6
1991	4069	20.9	796983	20.6
Afro-American Black				
1987	142	**	61763	16.5
1988	185	**	69509	16.6
1989	178	**	74227	16.6
1990	195	18.1	71197	17.0
1991	231	17.9	72681	17.0
American Indian/ Alaskan Native				
1987	50	**	7358	17.5
1988	66	**	8096	17.6
1989	78	**	9115	17.5
1990	69	18.8	9101	18.0
1991	68	18.9	9358	18.2
Caucasian				
1987	2946	21.4	610737	21.4
1988	3124	21.3	650999	21.4
1989	3119	21.3	661010	21.3
1990	3040	21.4	605361	21.2
1991	2978	21.5	588060	21.3
Mexican American/ Chicano				
1987	94	**	17448	18.1
1988	113	**	19717	18.3
1989	118	**	22685	18.1
1990	149	19.9	22806	18.3
1991	162	18.8	23837	18.4

CONTINUED...

TABLE 2, continued

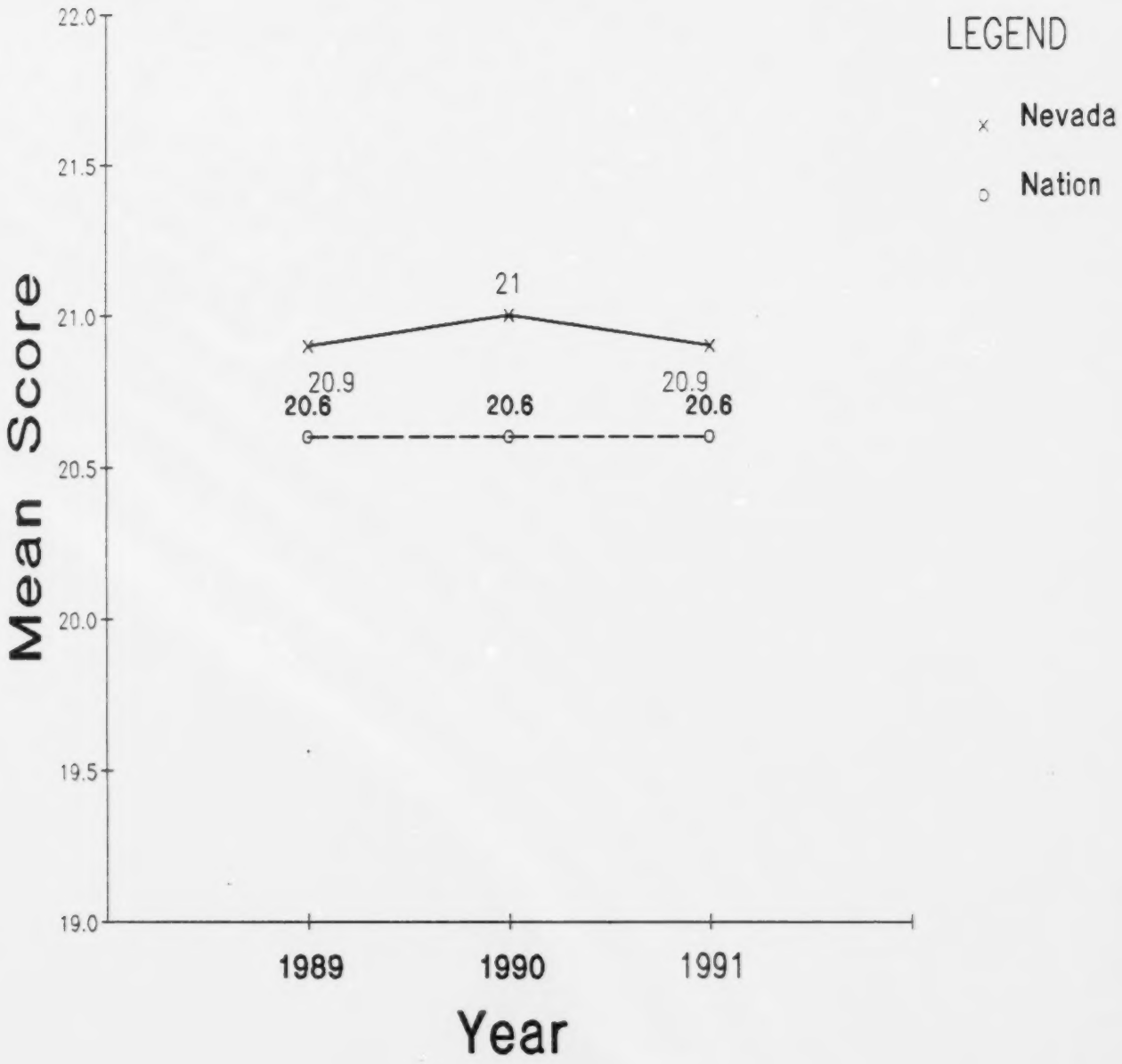
Trends in Average ACT Composite Scores*

Reference Group	NEVADA N	NEVADA Composite	NATIONAL N	NATIONAL Composite
Asian American/ Pacific Islander				
1987	167	**	13885	21.7
1988	206	**	15854	21.8
1989	205	**	17751	21.9
1990	219	21.4	19081	21.7
1991	255	20.5	20854	21.6
Puerto Rican Cuban/Other Hispanic				
1987	52	**	7564	19.2
1988	68	**	8622	19.4
1989	81	**	9880	19.3
1990	64	19.9	10669	19.3
1991	85	19.4	11135	19.3

* All average scores are on the scale for the Enhanced **ACT** Assessment. Averages for 1987-89 are based on scores estimated from a concordance table linking the scale for the original version of the **ACT** Assessment to that of the Enchanced **ACT** Assessment. Annual state and national trends in **ACT** scores beginning with 1969-70 are available on request.

** Before 1990, no score data has been provided for groups of fewer than 500.

FIGURE 3.
ACT - COMPOSITE SCORES
Nevada Statewide Test Results
1989-1991



III. NUMBER OF NEVADA EXAMINEES

Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the trends over time in the numbers of Nevada students choosing to take these examinations.

Figure 4: The data illustrated in Figure 4 represents the number of examinations administered to all Nevada High School students, (including 10, 11, and 12th graders). Figure 4 suggests that the numbers of all Nevada students choosing to take the **ACT** has shown substantial fluctuations and a clear decline from its highest in 1983, and then leveling off since 1988. The number of **ACT** examinations in 1991 remains at lower levels than 10 years earlier, but has slightly increased since last year. The **SAT** has shown a more stable pattern of consistently increasing usage since 1982, but has also leveled off since 1988. **SAT** usage, unlike the **ACT**, has remained at a higher number than in 1982. The **SAT** decreased slightly since last year.

Figure 5: This illustrates the number of 12th graders in Nevada electing to take either the **ACT** or **SAT**.

FIGURE 4.
ACT and SAT Examinations
Number of Nevada Test Takers
1982-1991

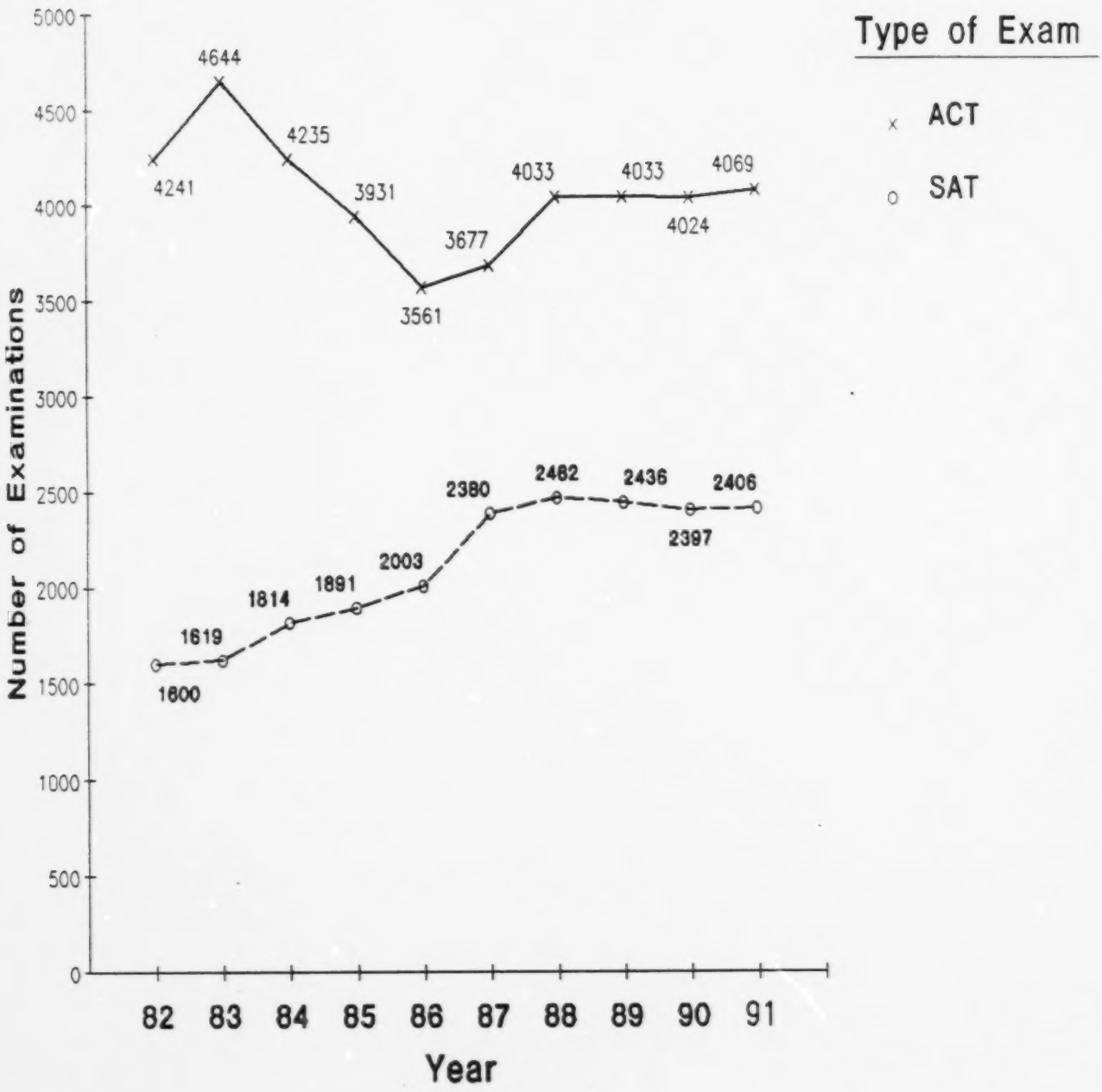


FIGURE 5.
TOTAL ACT and SAT EXAMINATIONS
Compared to Number of Nevada 12th Graders
1990-1991

1990

1991